

## Durham Research Online

---

### Deposited in DRO:

31 January 2018

### Version of attached file:

Published Version

### Peer-review status of attached file:

Peer-reviewed

### Citation for published item:

Archibald, Elizabeth (2014) 'Love and marriage in the Breton lays.', *Études épistémè*. (25).

### Further information on publisher's website:

<https://doi.org/10.4000/episteme.221>

### Publisher's copyright statement:

Études Epistémè is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License.

### Additional information:

---

### Use policy

The full-text may be used and/or reproduced, and given to third parties in any format or medium, without prior permission or charge, for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes provided that:

- a full bibliographic reference is made to the original source
- a [link](#) is made to the metadata record in DRO
- the full-text is not changed in any way

The full-text must not be sold in any format or medium without the formal permission of the copyright holders.

Please consult the [full DRO policy](#) for further details.

# Études Épistémè

Revue de littérature et de civilisation (XVI<sup>e</sup> – XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles)

25 | 2014

‘Gode is the lay, swete is the note’ : Résonances dans les lais bretons moyen-anglais

Part 3: Home Truths, Public Truths

---

## Love and Marriage in the Breton Lays

ELIZABETH ARCHIBALD

---

---

### Résumé

Love is usually said to be the central concern of the Middle English Breton lays, as of the French ones. But in fact the English poems pay relatively little attention to romantic love, and are more concerned with identity, family separation and reunion, loyalty and justice. In the French lays, as in French romances, adultery is often accepted, and the happiness of the *mal mariée* put before moral considerations. It is often argued that the English in the Middle Ages were not keen on stories of adultery. There are some striking exceptions – for instance Malory’s focus on Lancelot and Guinevere – but it is certainly not a common theme in the English lays, though it is notable that the two lays by Marie which survive in English versions are both about extra-marital love affairs.

---

### Texte intégral

- <sup>1</sup> According to Helen Cooper, in medieval romance ‘Adultery is the most extreme condition for showing the power of love; and it is a consequence of love, not (*pace* Lewis) the condition that makes love possible.’<sup>1</sup> It is often said, however, that adultery and illicit sex were less acceptable to English writers and audiences than to French ones. In Chaucer’s *Franklin’s Tale*, the happily married Dorigen reproves the squire Aurelius when he declares his love for her: ‘What deyntee sholde a man han in his lyf / For to go love another mannes wyf, / That hath hir body whan so that hym liketh?’<sup>2</sup> Cooper compares French and English attitudes to romance in the Middle Ages and later on:

Not only is French romance much more ready to accommodate adultery than is English (and Italian more so again), but the same phenomenon is illustrated even more generously in the later genre of the novel – fictional adultery, or its avoidance, can be a national rather than just a medieval or generic phenomenon.<sup>3</sup>

- <sup>2</sup> She discusses ‘the greater wariness towards adultery in English-language romance than in its French counterparts’, citing the example of the *Chatelain de Coucy*, where

the English version makes the lovers devoted but not actually adulterous.<sup>4</sup> The usual suspects invoked in this assessment of national stereotypes are Lancelot and Guinevere and Tristan and Iseult: Cooper notes that *Sir Tristrem* is 'the only Middle English romance before the fifteenth century to present, or to carry over from Anglo-French, a sympathetic story of an adulterous love', and also that it survives in only one copy.<sup>5</sup> There are numerous allusions in Middle English to Tristan and Iseult, and quite a lot of images of them, whereas Lancelot and Guinevere are seldom mentioned or depicted as a couple. Their stories would have been known in England from French texts such as the Vulgate Cycle and the Prose *Tristan* which circulated quite widely.<sup>6</sup>

3 Both texts were major sources for Malory, though he was an exception to the English norm in making Lancelot central to his *Arthuriad*, and thus putting a spotlight on the problematic affair with Guinevere.<sup>7</sup> It is often argued that he downplays the affair as much as possible. When the lovers are caught together in the final tale, Malory comments: 'And whether they were abed other at some other mane of disportis, me lyst nat thereof make no mencion, for love that tyme was nat as love ys nowadayes' (1165.10-13). This sort of comment has led one critic to argue that the most famous love affair in medieval literature was not actually consummated in Malory until very late on in the story, though this interpretation has been strongly rebutted.<sup>8</sup> It would be in very striking contrast with the elaborate description in the Vulgate Cycle of the first kiss, which made such a deep impression on Dante, and the early consummation of the affair. Elsewhere Malory is more forthcoming: in his version of the Knight of the Cart episode, when Lancelot breaks the window bars to spend the night with the queen, we are told that he 'toke hys plesaunce and hys lykyng untyll hit was the dawning of the day: for wyte you well he slept nat, but wacched' (1131.30-32). It is true that when challenged on his alleged affair with the Queen, Lancelot replies, 'who that usyth paramours shall be unhappy, and all thyng unhappy that is aboute them' (271.3-4). But of course he does not practise what he preaches, and after his death Malory eulogizes him through Sir Ector as 'hede of al Crysten knyghtes [...] the trewest lover, of a synful man, that ever loved woman' (1259.9-10, 14-15); this is a clear reference to Guinevere. I do not think English writers and readers of romance were nearly as prudish about adultery as has been claimed. I also think that their interest in love as demonstrated in the Breton lays has been exaggerated. I shall discuss the lays considering not only adultery but also extra-marital and illicit sex, and attitudes to love more generally.

4 Writing about the lays of Marie de France, Bruckner and Burgess declare that 'The constant theme of the lays is love; their constant concern, coupling.'<sup>9</sup> They see the same focus in the anonymous lays: 'Love, or the search for a harmonious relationship, is just as central to the anonymous authors, even if their emphases seem different, centring perhaps on plot rather than passion.'<sup>10</sup> Similarly Laskaya and Salisbury have argued that love is the central concern of the Middle English Breton lays: 'But the subject matter of most concern, as the Prologue to *Lay le Freine* suggests, is love [...] stories of lovers whose happy ending resides in marriage.'<sup>11</sup> The Prologue lists a number of themes of 'layes that ben in harpyng', ending with love: 'Of alle thinges that men seth, / Mest o love for sothe thai beth' (3, 11-12). According to Laskaya and Salisbury lays, being shorter than most romances, 'intensify and emphasize the importance of truth in love, both for its stabilizing influence on the family unit and its concomitant stabilization of a larger community.'<sup>12</sup> Similarly Shearle Furnish refers to *Degaré*, *Freine* and *Orfeo* as 'an anatomy of the powers of *eros* to integrate, preserve or heal the human community in its broadest conceptions – subject to God, king, and courtesy'.<sup>13</sup> Is this really true, for French or English lays?

5 Certainly Marie de France seems to argue that love is necessary for individual happiness and fulfilment. She is very sympathetic to *malmariées*, who are allowed to get away with various immoral acts, and she can be sympathetic to male adulterers. But in Marie's lays love does sometimes lead to irresponsibility, in terms of the community. King Equitan allows his steward to govern the kingdom while having an affair with the steward's wife; the implication is that the kingdom is better off for the king's death. In *Lanval* Arthur's rule is undermined by his unjust treatment of Lanval and defence of his promiscuous queen; Lanval's fairy love affair is the result of his neglect by the court

community and also results in his abandonment of that community – and whereas Tristan and Iseult only leave court temporarily, we know that Lanval will never come back. Personal happiness is paramount here. This is also true of *Eliduc*, where the hero's adulterous love is treated with remarkable tolerance both by his wife and by the author. Far from being punished, he has his cake and eats it too, and then dies well as a religious, alongside the two women in his life who are now nuns and have made friends. In *Fresne*, the heroine's love leads her to elope from the convent where she has been raised to live in sin with Gurun, who later rejects her for a higher-status wife. The fact that the bride turns out to be Fresne's long-lost sister, and that a general family reunion follows, hardly makes up for the brutality of Gurun's rejection of his lover.

- 6 It is striking that the two of Marie's lays that we know were translated into Middle English, *Lanval* and *Fresne*, both feature illicit love, loyal but extra-marital. Marie's Fresne does marry in the end, of course, but she seems quite happy to live with Gurun before that, and there is no discussion of any necessity to regularize the union, either from her point of view or that of the church; concubinage may have been widely accepted, but there is no criticism of Gurun's decision to abandon Fresne in order to marry a wife with a known pedigree. In *Lanval* the return of the mysterious lady to rescue Lanval is not attributed to love, but rather to a strong sense of justice, apparently: she tells Arthur 'Jeo ai amé un tuen vassal [...] ne vueil mie qu'a mal li turt' (I have loved a vassal of yours [...] I do not wish him to come to any harm).<sup>14</sup> As she rides away alone, he leaps onto her palfrey from a mounting block and is never seen again. Nothing is said of love by either of them – it is not a question of his not being able to live without her (though that may be the case), nor is it stated explicitly that love in Avalon is better than life at Arthur's court. This is all to be deduced by the reader or listener. In Chestre's *Sir Launfal*, which tends to be more explicit and realistic, Tryamour does not even say that she has loved Launfal in the past, but merely that she has come to free him (992-993). Nothing explicit is said about the love between Launfal and Tryamour at the end, as they ride away. A horse and squire are waiting for him, but again the rescue is not clearly attributed to love on her part. She rides to Olyroun, but it is not stated that Launfal goes with her; we merely hear of his annual joust with all comers and then we are told that he was 'taken ynto Fayrye' (1035). Do they marry? We do not know; there is no stabilizing of the family unit or community, as described by Laskaya and Salisbury (see above). Indeed, in both versions it seems that love cannot be integrated into the Arthurian community, nor can it improve the community, which is presented as fairly corrupt. As Kinoshita has remarked of Marie's *Lanval*, 'the protagonist is immortalized neither by his deeds nor by his progeny, but by his very disappearance' – by his disappearance, but not by his great love.<sup>15</sup> However in *Sir Landevale* both hero and fairy are much more forthcoming about their emotions; this is what we might have expected in *Sir Launfal*. She tells Arthur that she has come for "My trew leman" (479). When they ride off, he swears he will never leave her. She is stern at first, reproaching him for breaking his oath, but then relents and forgives him, adding, 'We wolle never twyn, day ne nighte' (524). The narrator comments as they ride away, 'Loo, how love is lefe to wyn / Of wemen that arn of gentylle kin!' This is very far from Marie's and Chestre's versions, so someone, whether French or English, evidently decided to make the love much more explicit, and the ending conventionally happy.

- 7 In the Middle English *Lay le Freine* we are hampered by the fact that the ending is missing, and has been reconstructed by a modern critic on the basis of Marie's version. I think it is remarkable that we hear Gurun's speech to the abbess, pretending to be a wellwisher of the convent, and then his rather peremptory invitation to Freine: "Leman", he seyde, "thou must lat be / The abbesse, thi nece, and go with me ..." (293ff.). Her response is given tersely in indirect speech: "The maiden grant, and to him trist, / And stale away that no man wist" (297-298). During her time as his concubine, we are told only that 'al his meyné loved hir wel' (306), because she is so nice to both rich and poor. Nothing is said of her happiness or love for Gurun. This is in strong contrast to Marie's version, where Gurun's speech to her is much more loving, and we are told that because she loved him deeply she eloped with him (287-302). However Marie says nothing of Fresne's emotions when she is set aside to make way for Le Codre, nor when they are reunited. The mother's mixed emotions at recovering her lost

daughter and admitting her guilty secret are the focus of the ending, and Fresne and Gurun take a back seat; we are told that Gurun marries his beloved, but not what she thinks about this unexpected good fortune. I think we can imagine that the lost English ending was close to this. The main theme here is not love but identity and family reunion.

8 We do not have a French source for *Sir Degaré*, though there could well have been one. Love here is very problematic, from beginning to end, and there is little stress on loyalty. Indeed, one might well draw the moral that love and marriage are extremely dangerous! The story begins with the rape of the heroine by a fairy knight, though this is apparently forgotten at the end, when the two are presented as long parted lovers now happily reunited through their illegitimate son (though there has been no indication that this is what both long for). Saunders has commented on this story that 'rape is rewritten as love'.<sup>16</sup> The *Bildungsroman* of their son Degaré includes near-miss incest (unintentional on both sides) and near-miss parricide (also unintentional). It is no wonder that at the end he marries a safely unrelated lady he had previously rescued. We are told that on first meeting her, he falls in love, but this is not repeated at the end, where she is described merely as 'that lady bryght / That he hadd wonne in gret fyght' (1098-1099). By contrast, in Marie's *Milun*, which offers some parallels, the long-separated lovers are fully committed to each other from the beginning, and so it really is a happy ending for both when they marry at the end. *Milun* is not allotted a random bride, and there is no near-miss incest. Again the main themes are identity and family reunion, not love.

9 There is no direct French source for *Emaré* either, though there are many analogues in Latin, French and other languages.<sup>17</sup> Here too love is presented as dangerous: again it leads to near-miss incest, but this time deliberate on the part of the father, though not the daughter. Whether it is just her charm or the effect of the robe she wears, Emaré attracts unwelcome attention wherever she goes and has to fend off various suitors. When she does marry, there is no indication that she is keen; indeed there is no comment at all on her feelings, though we are told later that she and the king are very happy together. When she arranges the reunion with her husband at the end, she is clearly eager to do it, but again is given no expressions of love for him, though we are told later how happy they are. Chaucer could have known this narrative or a close analogue when he composed his Man of Law's Tale of Custance; she has similar adventures, though they do not begin with incest, and her ordeals are doubled – two husbands, two vicious mothers-in-law, two exiles at sea. Chaucer gives Custance much more to say than in the analogues, but few of her speeches are expressions of love – rather he stresses her suffering, and that of many other women. It seems clear that he is commenting on and subverting a literary genre or motif, as he so often does.<sup>18</sup> If suffering is a leitmotif in Marie's lays, it is usually balanced, if not redeemed, by great happiness in love, even if that happiness is short-lived, as in *Yonec*. But Custance does not fall in love with either of her husbands; she does come to love the second, Alla, but he dies soon after their reunion, and she returns to live piously with her father. She is given some powerful speeches about women's unhappy lot and men's enormous power. The most famous is the one she makes to her father, the Emperor of Rome, as she sails off for Syria and her first marriage, a ringing indictment of patriarchy and arranged marriages:

'Allas, unto the Barbre naciun  
I moste anoon, syn that it is youre wille;  
But Crist, that starf for our redempcioun  
So yeve me grace his heestes to fulfille!  
I, wrecche womman, no fors though I spille!  
Wommen are born to thraldom and penance,  
And to be under mannes governance' (281-287).

10 Just before this, the narrator comments ironically, 'Housbondes been alle goode, and han ben yore; / That knowen wyves; I dar sey yow na moore' (272-273). And when she marries Alla, the narrator comments ironically again that wives 'must take in pacience at nyght / Swiche manere necessities as been plesynges / To folk that had ywedded

hem with rynges' (710-711). Custance is a sort of *malmariée*, it is implied, though she does not express any longing for love, nor does Emaré, nor is it their own feelings of love that cause all their suffering.

- 11 Suffering is an essential part of love, according to Andreas Capellanus in the opening of his enigmatic treatise.<sup>19</sup> But lovers often suffer because they have chosen a love object whom they cannot have, or from whom they are separated. Knights are often separated from their beloveds because they are off winning their spurs, proving themselves, and – crucially – being ennobled by their great passion. Malory describes the symbiosis of love and chivalry wonderfully succinctly in the opening of his 'Tale of Sir Lancelot du Lake'. He omits all the French descriptions of how Lancelot and Guinevere fell in love, how they first kissed, and when they first slept together, and simply gives us the bottom line, from a chivalric point of view:

So this sir Launcelot encrested so marvaylously in worship and honoure;  
**therefore** he is the firste knyght that the Freynsh booke makyth mencion of aftir  
kyng Arthure com from Rome. **Wherefore** quene Gwenyvere had hym in grete  
favoure aboven all other knyghtis, **and so** he loved the quene agayne aboven all  
other ladyes dayes of his lyff, and for hir he dud many dedys of armys and saved  
her frome the fyre thorow his noble chevalry (253, my emphasis).

- 12 There is no comment on the adulterous nature of their love. The same emphasis on ennobling love appears in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, where Troilus, once reassured by Pandarus that Criseyde is attainable, becomes the noblest, bravest, most generous knight in Troy (I.1079-85). This notion of ennobling love, so common in romance, does not seem to operate in the Breton lays. Marie argues in several of her poems that love improves and completes her protagonists, but this tends to manifest itself in intense passion for a lady, rather than in martial success or assistance for the needy. Guigemar initially scorns love; after his affair he does fight for Meriaduc's enemy, but this is a very minor aspect of the lay and there is no comment on his increased prowess. Equitan comments that beautiful women have a duty to improve their admirers through reciprocated love (83-88), but he himself is not improved in any way by his clandestine affair, which leads to his death. Lanval/Launfal becomes more generous, because his fairy lover gives him an endless supply of money; but in Marie we never see him fighting. He does win a tournament and defeat a giant in *Sir Launfal*, where the giant (Sir Valentine) challenges him specifically 'for thy lemmanes sake' (538) – but this seems to me the exception that proves the rule.

- 13 Who in the English Breton lays is unhappy because of intense love? Launfal, perhaps, but is he really unhappy because of his lost love or because of the loss of the riches and success she brings him? He does express his misery directly before falling into a swoon:

'Alas!' he seyde, 'my creature,  
How schall I from the endure,  
Swetyng Tryamour?  
All my love I have forelore,  
And the – that me ys worst fore –  
Thou blyssfull berde in bour!  
He bet his body and hys hedde ek,  
And cursede the mouth that he wyth spek,  
Wyth care and greet dolour;  
And for sorow yn that stounde  
Anon he fell aswowe to grounde. (745-755)

- 14 Swooning is a sign of extreme emotion and nobility in romance, for both men and women. There is undoubted love, and also distress, in *Sir Orfeo*, where Orfeo and his wife both express great emotions at the prospect of forced separation. When Heurodis has her first frightening encounter with the fairy king, she tears her hair and clothes and scratches her face (78-82). When the horrified Orfeo asks her what is wrong, he addresses her as 'lef liif' (102). The queen begins her explanation by saying that they have lived together in perfect happiness and mutual devotion:

Allas, my lord, Sir Orfeo,  
Sethen we first togider were,



Ones wroth never we nere;  
Bot ever ich have yloved the  
As mi liif and so thou me [...] (120-124)

15 When Heurodis is abducted by the fairy king, Orfeo finds life without her impossible; he appoints a regent and departs to the wilderness. One might expect the ending to mirror the opening in expression of emotion, but in fact once the queen is won back from the fairy king, she is hardly mentioned again. The ending is concerned with the return of the king in disguise and his reunion with the faithful steward. It is rather reminiscent of the ending of Chaucer's *Franklin's Tale*, with the competition between the three men concerned as to which is the most 'fre' or generous, and the marginalization of Dorigen.

16 Love is a more central concern in the less well known *Erle of Tolous*, which has no direct French source. Here love rather than passion is central to the plot, as Bruckner and Burgess commented on the anonymous French lays. Sir Barnard hears of the beauty of the Empress of Almayn and arranges to see her with the help of Sir Trylabas, an ally of the Emperor whom Barnard has captured. Trylabas swears loyalty to Barnard but plans to betray him. He tells the Empress of Barnard's love for her, but her response is only criticism of Trylabas' treachery. When the Empress willingly shows herself to Barnard, her motive and emotions are not entirely clear: 'Sche stode styll in that place / And schewed opynly hur face / For love of that knyght' (334-336). Barnard is disguised as a hermit; she gives him alms, including a ring (388-391), but says nothing of love. Two knights then try to seduce the queen; she is horrified, replying to one, 'What woman holdyst thou me [...] a hore or a scolde?' (648, 653). When she is falsely accused of adultery and condemned to be burned, Sir Barnard rescues her, disguised as a monk. The grateful Emperor is determined to reward the monk, even when he is revealed as the Earl, and the reunion of the two men is emotional:

The Emperoure came hym agayne  
And sayde, 'My frend so free,  
My wrath here y the forgeve,  
My helpe, my love, whyll y lyve,  
Be Hym that dyed on tree!'

Togedur lovely can they kysse;  
Thereof all men had grete blysse:  
The romaunse telleth so [...] (1191-1198)

17 These last lines might have described a romantic encounter, but here the homosocial bonding of Emperor and Earl dominates; nothing at all is said here about the Empress's feelings or any expression of gratitude to the Earl. A few lines later the Emperor dies, and the Earl and the Empress are able to marry in the required happy ending, though we still hear nothing specific about her reactions: 'He weddyd that lady to hys wyfe; / Wyth joye and myrthe they ladde ther lyfe / Twenty yere and three' (1208-1210). The Tristan model is rejected here; the lady remains virtuous, and the Earl's love is less emphasised in the second half of the poem. The Earl seems a more successful version of Chaucer's Aurelius in the *Franklin's Tale*. He does not suffer particularly while waiting for the Empress. She was not unhappy in her first marriage, even if her husband seemed somewhat unworthy of her. In the end she and the Earl are able to marry and live happily ever after. Although love is central to the story, at least from the Earl's point of view, it is curiously understated – or not so curiously, in view of the lack of interest in love in most of the other English lays.

18 Marie's attitude to love is certainly ambivalent. She does not approve of all extra-marital affairs, or consistently share Equitan's view that ladies are obliged to make knights happier and better men; some adulterers, both male and female, pay with their lives. Furrow's comment on Gower's allusions to Tristan and Iseult seems to apply just as well to Marie's lays:

Gower's allusions run the gamut, from playfully fitting the excesses of Tristram into his taxonomy of sin (drunkenness in love) to simple acknowledgement of their fame as lovers, to admiration of their loyalty as lovers, to disapproval of their

disloyalty as adulterers. Which of these is the real moral Gower speaking? All of them, for the point is not that there is only one possible morally correct reading of the story but that to read morally is to remember *mores* – how people behave – for application later on when the situation calls for such examples.<sup>20</sup>

19 The English lays demonstrate little psychological interest in love or suffering for love. The writers seem keen to end with marriage, but much less interested in passion. Marie often finishes her lays with a comment on love and suffering. She does not approve of Equitan, clearly. Yet, her brief epilogue mentions not only how he died, but how he was loved, without any moral comment: ‘cument il fina / e la dame ki tant l’ama’ (319-320: ‘about how Equitan died and about the lady who loved him so dearly’). *Yonec* ends tragically for the lovers: the audience have heard ‘de la peine e de la dolor / que cil sufrirent pur amur’ (561-562: ‘about the sorrow and grief that they suffered for love’). *Chaitivel* ends with an argument between the lady and the maimed knight about who suffers more, and about the person for whom the lay should be named. The English lays end very differently, usually with happy reunions and long-lasting marriages. The lack of adultery in these poems makes the happy endings easier to achieve.

20 Saunders has argued that in England royal and aristocratic audiences would have been reading and hearing romances in French, whereas the barons and the bourgeoisie ‘would not have been seeking the high-flown French courtly mode so much as tales of popular idealism in English’.<sup>21</sup> ‘The high-flown courtly mode’ apparently includes stories of adultery and illicit love, whereas ‘popular idealism’ seems to emphasize respectable love and loyalty. Saunders concludes that English romances ‘fulfil more serious functions in their treatment of profound questions relating to the practicalities and the experience of love, and in particular its social impact and function’.<sup>22</sup> The Middle English Breton lays do not seem to me much interested in ‘the practicalities and the experience of love and its social impact and function’. A stronger case about central themes could be made for identity and recognition, family separation and reunion, unjust suffering, or loyalty and justice. It is true that adultery does not feature in the English lays, but there are certainly some instances of illicit love with little if any negative comment. Malory did not consider adultery too off-putting for his audience, nor did Caxton, that astute businessman. In the Middle English Breton lays love is a necessary factor in most plots, but is rarely explored in any detail, and is often treated quite perfunctorily. Overall, while happy endings do usually include marriage or reunion for the protagonists, the experience of love does not seem to be ‘the subject matter of most concern’ in the lays, as has been claimed both in the Prologue to *Lai le Freine* and by modern critics.<sup>23</sup>

---

## Notes

1 Helen Cooper, ‘The Adultery Question’ in ‘Women on Trial’, ch. 6 of *The English Romance in Time: Transforming Motifs from Geoffrey of Monmouth to the Death of Shakespeare*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 307-321, here p. 321.

2 *The Franklin’s Tale*, lines 1002-1006, in *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry Benson, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1998; all Chaucer references are to this edition.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 307.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 318.

5 *Ibid.*, p. 319.

6 See for instance Roger Middleton, ‘Manuscripts of the *Lancelot-Grail Cycle* in England and Wales: Some Books and their Owners’, in Carol Dover (ed.), *A Companion to the Lancelot-Grail Cycle*, Cambridge, D. S. Brewer, 2003, p. 218-235.

7 See Elizabeth Archibald, ‘Malory’s Lancelot and Guenevere’, in Helen Fulton (ed.), *A Companion to Arthurian Literature*, Oxford, Blackwell, 2009, p. 312-325. All references to Malory are to *Morte Darthur*, ed. Eugène Vinaver, rev. ed. P. J. C. Field, 3 vols, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1990, cited here parenthetically by page and line number (pagination is continuous).

8 See Beverly Kennedy, ‘Adultery in Malory’s *Le Morte Darthur*’, *Arthuriana*, 7.4, 1997, p. 63-91, and the responses by Robert Sturges and Maureen Fries in the same volume.



9 Matilda Tomaryn Bruckner and Glyn S. Burgess, 'Arthur in the Narrative Lay', in Glyn S. Burgess and Karen Pratt (eds), *The Arthur of the French: The Arthurian Legend in Medieval French and Occitan Literature*, Cardiff, University of Wales Press, 2006, p. 186-214, here p. 193.

10 *Ibid.*, p. 202.

11 'Introduction', *The Middle English Breton Lays*, ed. Anne Laskaya and Eve Salisbury, TEAMS, Kalamazoo, MI, Medieval Institute Publication, 1995, p. 5. All citations of Middle English Breton lays are from this edition.

12 *Ibid.*, p. 5-6.

13 Shearle Furnish, 'Thematic Structure and Symbolic Motif in the Middle English Breton Lays', *Traditio*, 62, 2007, p. 83-118, here p. 96.

14 *Lanval*, lines 633 and 636, in *Lais de Marie de France*, ed. Karl Warnke, Paris, Lettres Gothiques, 2008; *The Lais of Marie de France*, trans. Glyn S. Burgess and Keith Busby, 1986; 2nd ed., London, Penguin Classics, 1999, p. 81. All references are to these editions.

15 Sharon Kinoshita, 'Cherchez la Femme: Feminist Criticism and Marie de France's "Lai de Lanval"', *Romance Notes*, 34.3, 1994, p. 263-273, here p. 273.

16 Corinne Saunders, 'Love and Loyalty in Middle English Romance', in Helen Cooney (ed.), *Writings on Love in the English Middle Ages*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2006, p. 45-61, here p. 56.

17 See Elizabeth Archibald, 'Fathers and Daughters', ch. 4 of *Incest and the Medieval Imagination*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 2001, p. 145-191.

18 See Elizabeth Archibald, 'Contextualizing Chaucer's Constance: Romance Modes and Family Values', in M. Teresa Tavormina and R. F. Yeager (eds), *The Endless Knot: Essays on Old and Middle English in Honor of Marie Borroff*, Cambridge, D. S. Brewer, 1995, p. 161-175.

19 *Andreas Capellanus on Love*, Book One, ed. and trans. P. G. Walsh, London, Duckworth, 1982, p. 32-33.

20 Melissa Furrow, *Expectations of Romance: The Reception of a Genre in Medieval England*, Cambridge, D. S. Brewer, 2009, p. 163.

21 C. Saunders, art. cit., p. 58.

22 *Ibid.*, p. 60.

23 See the comments of Anne Laskaya and Eve Salisbury, quoted at the beginning of this essay.

---

## Pour citer cet article

### Référence électronique

Elizabeth Archibald, « Love and Marriage in the Breton Lays », *Études Épistémè* [En ligne], 25 | 2014, mis en ligne le 01 avril 2014, consulté le 31 janvier 2018. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/episteme/221> ; DOI : 10.4000/episteme.221

---

## Auteur

### Elizabeth Archibald

Elizabeth Archibald studied first Classics and then Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic at Cambridge; she did a PhD in Medieval Studies at Yale. She has taught at Cambridge, the University of Victoria (Canada), and Bristol, and is currently Professor of English Studies at Durham University, and Principal of St Cuthbert's Society. Her main research areas are medieval romance, especially the Arthurian legend; the classical tradition in the Middle Ages; representations of women in medieval literature; and the interface of literature and social history. Her publications include *Apollonius of Tyre: Medieval and Renaissance Themes and Variations* (1991); *A Companion to Malory* (1996), co-edited with A. S. G. Edwards; *Incest and the Medieval Imagination* (2001); and *The Cambridge Companion to the Arthurian Legend*, co-edited with Ad Putter (2009). She is currently President of the British Branch of the International Arthurian Society, and is working on a monograph on baths and bathing in medieval literature and society.

---

## Droits d'auteur



*Études Épistémè* is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License.